

## GINSENG/ PANAX

**Common Names:** *Asian ginseng, Chinese ginseng*

**Scientific Names:** *Panax ginseng*

**Effectiveness:** There is no evidence for ginseng in rheumatic conditions. Ginseng is NOT recommended for people with autoimmune diseases, such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus.

**Safety:** When used orally and appropriately ginseng seems to be safe for up to 6 months. Use for greater than 6 months is not recommended.

### What is Ginseng?

- Panax Ginseng is a ginseng plant found in Asia.
- Its root has been found to have medical properties and has been used for over 2000 years in powdered, dried, sliced, and whole form.

### What it is it used for in people with rheumatic conditions?

- Ginseng has been used in people with “rheumatism”.
- Ginseng has been used to stimulate immune function and improve well-being.

### How is it thought to work?

- Ginseng contains many different chemicals (ginsenosides, panaxosides) that are thought to have medicinal properties.

### What are possible side effects and what can I do about them?

- Ginseng is generally well tolerated when used orally for up to 6 months. Ginseng should not be used for more than 6 months at a time because of its hormone-like effects.
- Ginseng is stimulating and the most common side effect is difficulty sleeping (insomnia). It may also make you feel jittery or speed up your heartbeat.

- Less common side effects include breast pain, vaginal bleeding, increased or decreased blood pressure, fluid retention, diarrhea, headache and decreased appetite.

## Interactions

### **With drugs:**

- Ginseng boosts the immune system and may interfere with drugs used to modify the immune system, including prednisone and disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs).
- Ginseng may reduce the amount platelets clump together (platelet aggregation). Ginseng can increase the risk of bruising and/or bleeding in patients taking anticoagulant/antiplatelet drugs.
- Common antiplatelet and anticoagulant drugs may include: *warfarin (Coumadin)*, *ASA (Aspirin)*, and *clopidogrel (Plavix)*, *ticagrelor (Brilinta)*, *prasugrel (Effient)*, *enoxaparin (Lovenox)*, *dalteparin (Fragmin)*, *dabigatran (Pradaxa)*, *rivaroxaban (Xarelto)*, *apixaban (Eliquis)* and others.
- Ginseng may increase the effects of caffeine and other stimulants.
- Ginseng may increase the risk of life-threatening changes in the way the heart beats (arrhythmias) when used with drugs that also increase this risk.
  - Such as: *amiodarone*, *sotalol*, *procainamide*, and others

### **With Other Diseases:**

- Ginseng boosts the immune system. This may affect control of autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis, lupus, and others. It should not be used by people with these conditions.
- Ginseng may lower blood sugar levels. Patients with diabetes should monitor levels more closely.

### **With Other Natural Health Products:**

- Ginseng may reduce the amount platelets clump together (platelet aggregation). Ginseng can interact with other natural health products that also affect blood clotting. This would increase the risk of bruising and/or bleeding.
  - Such as: *garlic*, *ginkgo*, *ginger*, *red clover*, and others.

- Ginseng may increase the risk of life-threatening changes in the way the heart beats (arrhythmias) when used with other natural health products that also increase this risk
  - Such as: *bitter orange, country mallow, and ephedra.*

*For more information about Ginseng, consult your physician and pharmacist.*